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BOSTON LANDMARKS COMMISSION

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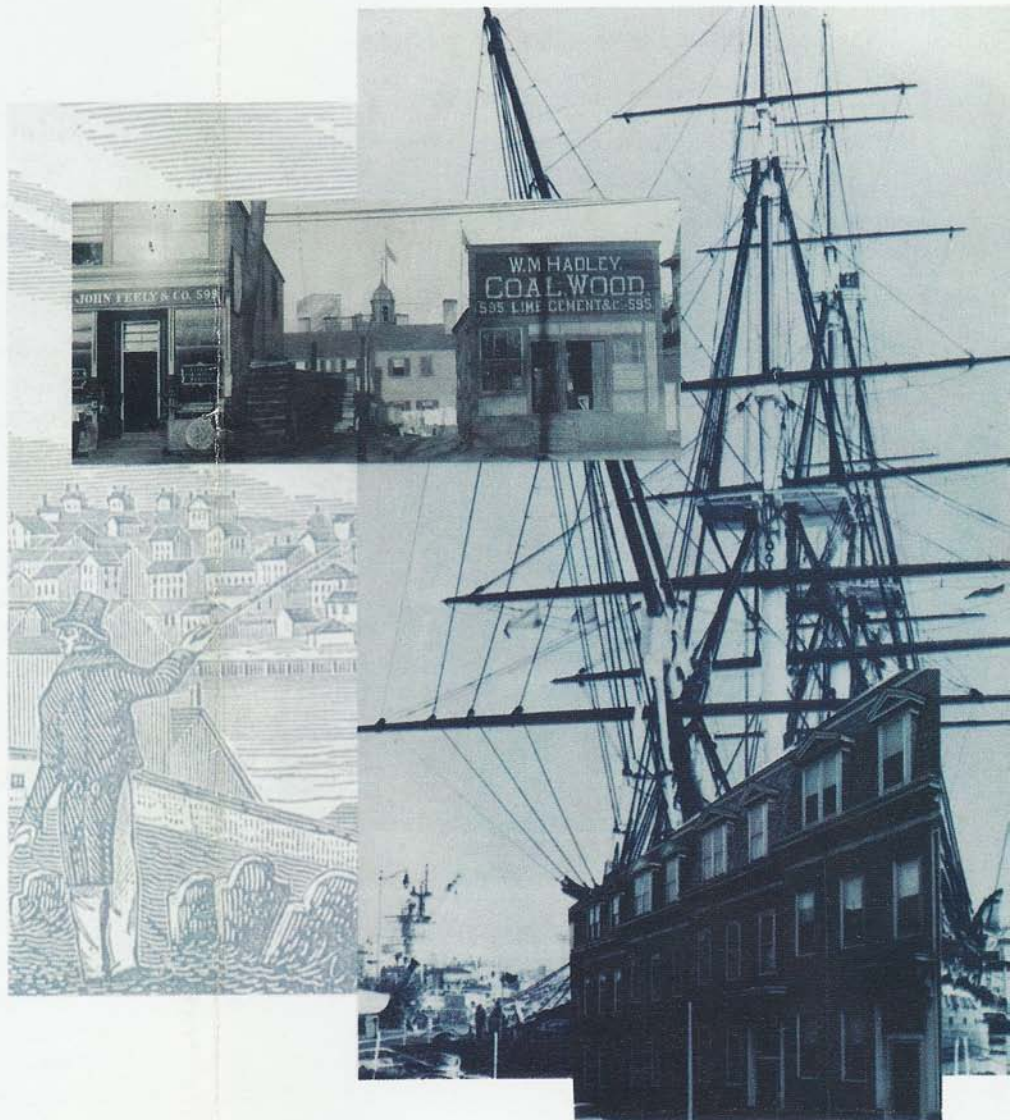


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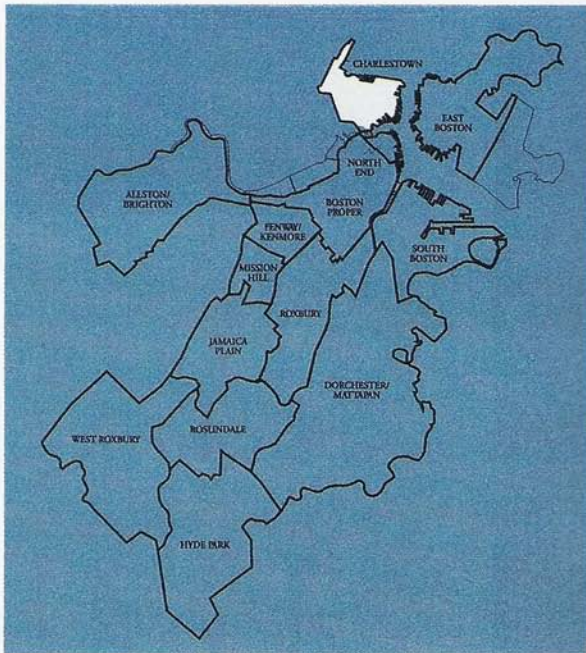
Exploring Boston's Neighborhoods



BOSTON LANDMARKS
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harlestown began as an independent community, founded by English colonists before they established Boston across the harbor on the Shawmut Peninsula. Severely damaged by fire following the Battle of Bunker Hill in 1775, the once-thriving colonial town was rebuilt after



the Revolution and became a center of transportation and maritime industry in the 19th century. Annexed to Boston in 1874, Charlestown today is noted for its exceptionally rich collection of historic houses and industrial buildings.



THE BEGINNING OF THE BAY COLONY

As the Massachusetts Bay Company prepared for its massive migration to New England, it dispatched engineer Thomas Graves from England in 1629 to lay out a town for the settlers. Graves was attracted by the narrow Mishawum Peninsula between the Charles and Mystic rivers, linked to the mainland at the present Sullivan Square. Charlestown became one of the handful of early settlements, preceding Boston and originally encompassing large sections of Middlesex County.

The area of earliest settlement, at Town Hill, still retains the elliptical street pattern that Thomas Graves laid out. Among the first structures was the Great House at Market Square (now City Square). The government of the Massachusetts Bay Colony was established in this all-purpose building. In 1635, it was converted into a tavern and stood until

This 1743 view shows development clustered around Market Square and the waterfront. Breed's Hill is in the center.

it was burned by the British in 1775. During the 18th century, Market Square was paved and other important town institutions, including the courthouse and meeting-house, were located here. The area was used as a market place even after the fire of 1775 and eventually became known as City Square; it is now a designated Boston

Landmark as an historic and archaeological site.

Charlestown still has a number of other 17th-century sites. The Phipps Street Burying Ground is the last resting place of many early residents of the town, including schoolmaster John Harvard, whose library of 300 volumes was left at his death in 1638 to the college in Cambridge that now bears his name. John Harvard's gravestone has been lost, but the burying ground contains a granite obelisk erected in his honor in 1828 by graduates of Harvard College. The burying ground contains three centuries' worth of decorative grave markers and monuments.

Charlestown's Training Field (at Warren and Winthrop streets), the common grazing area and militia parade ground, was laid out in the 1640s.

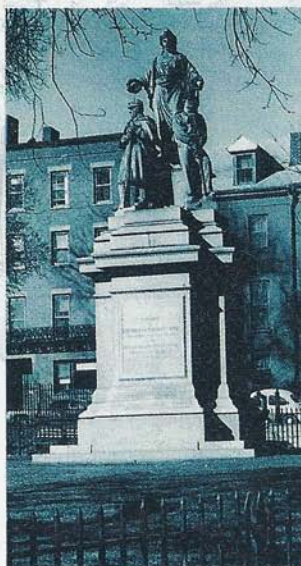
Whaling and merchant trading were early Charlestown enterprises. Francis Willoughby built the town's first shipyard in 1641; in 1678, the colony's government induced James Russell to construct the first dry dock in America. The commercial and shipping area of the town was concentrated around the present Henley and Wapping streets.

The 17th-century
Training Field later
became a park.

The Soldiers' and
Sailors' Monument
was added after
the Civil War.

THE BATTLE OF BUNKER HILL

At the beginning of the Revolutionary War, Charlestown's population had reached about 2,000, and the town contained as many as 400 buildings. Following the battles of Concord and Lexington on April 19, 1775, the British headed toward Charlestown in retreat, and most towns-



people fled when they heard the news. Two months later, on June 17, the Battle of Bunker Hill was fought in Charlestown. Although the battle was actually fought on nearby Breed's Hill, the plan had been to engage the British on Bunker Hill, and the name stuck. The American troops lost the battle, but the strength and determination they showed, together with the great British losses, gave an important boost to their cause. Following the battle, British troops burned the oldest section of Charlestown to the ground. Citizens cautiously began to return after the British fled Boston in March, 1776, but full-fledged reconstruction of the town did not occur until after the war ended in 1781.

POST- REVOLUTIONARY GROWTH

During the decades following the Revolutionary War, the citizens of Charlestown seemed to be trying to make up for lost time, as new residential and industrial areas were built up. Among the oldest buildings is the Warren Tavern (1780), extensively rebuilt in the 1970s. Large landholders on the southeastern slopes of Breed's Hill subdivided their land for development, laying out the streets that still bear their names — Soley, Cordis, Green, and

Wood. Skilled local housewrights built handsome Federal-style houses. No other Boston neighborhood has such a fine group of frame houses from this period. Some of the many examples include 2 and 4 Salem Street, probably built in the 1790s, 1 Prescott Street (1803) and 21 Cordis Street (1806).



Built about 1806,
14 Common Street
is a fashionable
example of the
Federal style. Its first
owner was a master
ironworker at the
Navy Yard.



Subdivision and development gradually moved up the peninsula toward the Neck at today's Sullivan Square – the Salem Hill area in the 1830s, and the streets from Walker to Baldwin from the 1830s to the 1860s. The Sullivan family promoted real estate development in that area from the 1840s to the early 1870s.

THE BUNKER HILL MONUMENT

The most ambitious residential building project centered on Breed's Hill, site of the misnamed Battle of Bunker Hill. In the first decades of the 19th century, a group of prominent local citizens decided to erect a monument to the battle. In 1825, the 50th anniversary of the battle, they commissioned architect/engineer Solomon Willard to design the now-familiar 220-foot granite obelisk in the Egyptian Revival style, often favored for monuments to the dead. (Open to the public; 242-5601.) Begun in 1826, the monument was not completed until 1842.

▲ This 19th-century promotional brochure shows the projected development of Monument Square.

BOSTON LANDMARK Charlestown Savings Bank



The Charlestown Savings Bank is one of the many commercial blocks constructed in Boston during the years after the Civil War. Built in 1876 in the High Victorian Gothic style and prominently sited in Thompson Square, this block displays exceptional design and workmanship. The building shows the decorative contrast that marks this style – complex massing, arched windows, contrasts of color, pattern, and texture. The front facade is sandstone enlivened by decorative bands and windows. The building was designed by the Boston architectural firm of Moffette and Tolman. It was commissioned by the Charlestown Savings Bank, established in 1854, which encouraged sav-

ing among the public by accepting deposits as small as five cents. The bank occupied the building until 1978, as did the Masonic lodge for which the top floors were built. The building now contains shops and offices.

As an official Boston Landmark, this building is protected from changes that would adversely affect its historic character. For information on designating local landmark buildings and districts, please contact the Boston Landmarks Commission at 635-3850.



◀ The houses at 6 and 7 Monument Square are brick bowfronts with brownstone trim, granite basements, and graceful ironwork.

Around that time, the first toll-free bridge connecting Charlestown to Boston was built, bringing with it Bostonians who found Charlestown an attractive place to live. Except for a four-acre tract around the monument, land fronting the square was sold for house lots.

MONUMENT SQUARE

As the house lots were sold, a residential neighborhood developed around Monument Square, reaching its height in the years between 1847, when Charlestown became a city, and 1874, when it was annexed to Boston. Today, 45 residential buildings line the square. A few frame houses dating to the 18th century were moved to the square from other locations in Charlestown. Most of the buildings, however, are of brick or stone, of uniform height,

and date to the second half of the 19th century, giving the area a harmonious look, despite many variations of style.

Numbers 6 and 7 Monument Square are a pair of rowhouses dating to 1847. The first houses to be built after the square was laid out, they were constructed for Charlestown Mayor George Washington Warren and industrialist Peter Hubbell. These Greek Revival-style buildings established a setback from the street that most of the later buildings adhere to. Later houses around the square, many of them architect-designed, exemplify the succeeding Italianate and Second Empire styles of the 1850s, '60s, and '70s, as well as other later styles.

TRANSPORTATION AND INDUSTRY

Charlestown's residential building boom was fueled in part by post-Revolutionary developments in transportation and industry. By 1785, 13 wharves lined Charlestown's harbor, and soon new bridges increased trade. In 1800, the U.S. Navy opened a yard at Moulton's Point, attracting other maritime industry and becoming one of Charlestown's major employers for more than 150 years. The Navy Yard, now decommissioned, combines private residences and businesses with the Boston National Historical Park. (Open to public; 242-5601.) One of its notable historic buildings is The Ropewalk, designed in 1834 by Alexander Parris, the architect of Quincy Market. Its extreme length was necessary to accommodate 19th-century rope-making technology. The Chain Forge and



Foundry, built in 1904, was the center for the production of die-link chain, an invention of this yard that gave the U.S. Navy a strategic advantage for its destroyers in World War II.

In 1803, the Middlesex Canal opened with Charlestown as its southern terminus, linking the Merrimack Valley with Boston Harbor. A commercial building from this period is the Austin Block (92 Main Street), built about 1827 and now a designated Boston Landmark.

Beginning in the 1830s, railroads began to eclipse the canal, and Charlestown's wharves became the terminus for lines from inland Massachusetts. Export products flowed into Charlestown, and local businesses flourished. In 1875, transportation links were com-

◀ Built of rough rubble stone with granite trim, the Federal-style Austin Block was one of the first masonry buildings in Charlestown.



◀

**The High Victorian
Gothic-style
St. Mary's Church
is the second
building of
Charlestown's
first Roman
Catholic parish.**

pleted as the opening of the Hoosac Tunnel in western Massachusetts connected the Fitchburg Line with the great western railroads. The Hoosac Stores, red brick warehouses at 25 and 115 Water Street, were built in the 1890s by the Fitchburg Railway adjacent to the Hoosac Docks.

IMMIGRATION AND DIVERSITY

Between 1830 and 1870, Charlestown's population tripled to more than 28,000. By 1865, immigrants – primarily those from Ireland – made up almost a quarter of the people in the neighborhood. These years of growth were marked by the construction of new community institutions to meet the needs of an expanding and more diverse population. School buildings from this

period include the Greek Revival-style Harvard School of the 1840s at 45 Harvard Street and the Second Empire-style Bunker Hill School of 1866 at Baldwin and Bunker Hill streets.

Charlestown also has several mid-19th-century churches. Among the most important is the St. Francis de Sales Roman Catholic Church on Bunker Hill, designed by prominent church architect Patrick C. Keeley in the Gothic and Celtic Revival styles and completed in 1862. Keeley also designed St. Mary's Church at 55 Warren Street (1892). Other denominations were also active in the community, as shown by the

Gothic Revival St. John Episcopal Church of 1870 at 27 Devens Street and the Trinity Methodist Episcopal Church, now altered, built in 1867 at 62 High Street.

20TH-CENTURY DEVELOPMENTS

Built just before the turn of the century, Roughan Hall in City Square is a monumental retail, office, and function hall building symbolizing neighborhood pride. Beginning in 1901, the elevated streetcar line transformed the appearance of City and Sullivan squares with its massive structure. The "El" made the neighborhood accessible to more people, stimulating industrial growth, but it also cast a visual blight over Charlestown. New industrial buildings included the Revere Sugar Refinery, completed in 1919, and the Wiggins Terminal, built from 1907 to 1930. This terminal was a successor to the earlier rail links and storage facilities on the Charlestown waterfront.



Also built at this time was the massive, Art Deco-style Schrafft's Confectionery Plant on the site of the old Tufts Mill Pond near Sullivan Square, now converted to offices.

During World War II, the Navy Yard employed 47,000 workers, but peacetime brought severe unemployment and decline, heightened by the opening of the Tobin Bridge in the 1950s. More change has come in the last two decades, with the dismantling of the "El" and the closing and redevelopment of the Navy Yard. Now, a century after it was built, Roughan Hall has been restored, and with the depression of the Central Artery, City Square will once more have the human scale and open space appropriate to its historic and civic importance.

◀

**Roughan Hall,
which combines the
Renaissance Revival
and Romanesque
Revival styles, is the
only 19th-century
building remaining
in City Square.**